

the UI to select one or more of the templates stored by the mapping engine 118. The active template specifies one or more metrics to display in combination with a map.

[0064] At some point, the end-user (or another entity) utilizes the mapping engine 118 to view a map of a geographic region. As part of this process, the mapping engine 118 receives mapping data from the map server 110. In addition, the mapping engine 118 receives metrics for the region being mapped from the metrics server 112. The metrics received by the mapping engine 118 are specified by the active template.

[0065] The mapping engine 118 displays the map and metrics on a display device 218 of the client 116. The metrics are shown relative to a reference point on the map, and, in one embodiment, the metrics change in real time as the reference point changes. The mapping engine 118 determines some computed metrics, such as the location of the nearest school, based on other, metrics and/or map data.

[0066] Thus, the mapping engine 118 displays a variety of metrics on a map. An end-user can customize both the metrics and the ways that the metrics are displayed. In this fashion, the end-user can view a variety of data on a map while maintaining a high level of comprehension.

[0067] The above description is included to illustrate the operation of the preferred embodiments and is not meant to limit the scope of the invention. The scope of the invention is to be limited only by the following claims. From the above discussion, many variations will be apparent to one skilled in the relevant art that would yet be encompassed by the spirit and scope of the invention.

1. A mapping engine for displaying an electronic map on a display device, comprising:

- a template module for receiving a template, the template specifying one or more metrics to display on the electronic map including at least one computed metric that is generated responsive to other metrics;
- a metric computation module for determining the computed metric specified by the template; and
- a rendering module for displaying the electronic map and the metrics specified by the template on the display device.

2. The mapping engine of claim 1, further comprising: a map module for receiving map data for the electronic map from a map server via a network.

3. The mapping engine of claim 1, further comprising: a user interface module for receiving user input manipulating the electronic map displayed by the rendering engine,

wherein the metric computation module is adapted to determine the computed metric responsive to the manipulations of the electronic map, and

wherein rendering engine is adapted to update the map and metrics displayed on the display device responsive to the manipulations of the electronic map.

4. The mapping engine of claim 1, further comprising: a user interface module for receiving user input manipulating the template received by the template module, wherein the manipulations alter the metrics specified by the template;

wherein the metric computation module is adapted to determine the computed metric responsive to the manipulations of the template, and

wherein rendering engine is adapted to update the map and metrics displayed on the display device responsive to the manipulations of the template.

5. The mapping engine of claim 4, further comprising: a communications module adapted to provide the manipulated template to a server via a network.

6. The mapping engine of claim 1, wherein the template module is adapted to store a plurality of templates, the templates specifying different metrics to display on the map, one or more of the templates are designated as "active," the metric computation module is adapted to determine computed metrics specified by the active templates, and the rendering module is adapted to display the metrics specified by the active templates.

7. The mapping engine of claim 1, further comprising: a metric module for receiving the metrics from a metrics server via a network.

8. The mapping engine of claim 7, wherein the mapping engine is adapted to execute on a computer, and wherein the metric module is adapted to receive a metric from an end-user of the computer.

9. The mapping engine of claim 8, further comprising: a communications module adapted to provide the metric received from the end-user to the metrics server via the network.

10. The mapping engine of claim 1, wherein the template further specifies how to display a metric and wherein the rendering module displays the metric on the electronic map as specified by the template.

11. The mapping engine of claim 10, wherein the rendering module is further adapted to display a map area and a metrics panel on the display device, and to selectively display the metrics in the map area and/or the metrics panel as specified by the template.

12. A computer program product having a computer-readable medium having computer program logic embodied therein for displaying an electronic map on a display device, the computer program logic comprising:

- a template module for receiving a template, the template specifying one or more metrics to display on the electronic map including at least one computed metric that is generated responsive to other metrics;
- a metric computation module for determining the computed metric specified by the template; and
- a rendering module for displaying the electronic map and the metrics specified by the template on the display device.

13. The computer program product of claim 12, further comprising:

- a map module for receiving map data for the electronic map from a map server via a network.

14. The computer program product of claim 12, further comprising:

- a metric module for receiving the metrics from a metrics server via a network.

15. The computer program product of claim 12, further comprising:

- a user interface module for receiving user input manipulating the electronic map displayed by the rendering engine,

wherein the metric computation module is adapted to dynamically determine the computed metric responsive to the manipulations of the electronic map, and